2: Sanders E-5 (no date) 1949 EE1 Bulgaria EE1

with these words: "I took the child away a Jew and now I return him to you a Christian."

There was usually an awkward wait of half an hour or more until the meal was ready and the priest had come to give the blessing so the feasting could begin. The christening dinner was one of the most significant of all family events for both adults and children. A child could not attend school without a baptismal certificate, nor could he later join the army, get a passport, or do anything of real importance without this church record. For a child from an Orthodox home to be unchristened was worse than having him unnamed; he did not exist legally. The national government, however, honored the equivalent of these baptismal certificates given by religious minority groups for their members, and also considered valid their marriages and divorces, be they Moslems, Jews, or Protestants. This religious freedom and tolerance had been a source of pride to many a Bulgarian in the past.

There were times in Dragalevtsy, though rare indeed, when the two families involved felt it best to break off the godparent relationship. If a woman, for instance, had three or four miscarriages, the godparents, who officiated at the wedding, might say: "You're not having very good luck with your children. We've been talking it over, and believe that things would work out better for you if you had different godparents." The husband and wife could then invite another couple to be godparents.

There were a few instances where babies did not have godparents at birth. Former godparents for the family might have died, moved away, or been unwilling to serve. In such a case the baby, no matter what the weather happened to be, was left on a street corner near the church just prior to the Sunday morning service. Naturally, the cries of the child attracted the curiosity of some passer-by. At the moment that he went over to look at the baby some elderly woman rushed out of hiding to say: "Congratulations, sir. You have the honor of serving as godparent to this child." So off he was marched to the church, be he foreigner, gypsy, drunk, or on important government business, to participate as godfather in the christening. Should he move to some distant place, he was still expected to keep in touch with his unexpected charge and, if possible, return in due course of time to take part in the

659 governed by their ecclesiastical authorities under the supreme supervision of the minister of state." (Article 42).

659 798 However, the communists did not attack the Church but on the one hand, they proceeded very cautiously in religious matters not wanting to offend openly the feelings of the people; on the other, under a new policy toward religion inaugurated by the U.S.S.R. they did not undertake to destroy the Church but use it for their purposes. The general line established by the Russian Communist Party in 1942 called for a truce with and the utilization of religion for the sake of political expediency. A lesser factor for this attitude was the necessity to operate within a political coalition in which there existed strong forces of moderation.

Thus, in its policy toward religion the Fatherland Front government declined at first to adopt a clear-cut formula and proceeded with individual measures primarily dealing with the Orthodox Church. The regime governing the status of the Orthodox Church until 1944 was tacitly suspended.

The communists did not proclaim immediately the complete separation of the Church and State, which they had originally planned. This could have provoked great discontent not only because of the national and moral prestige enjoyed by the Bulgarian Church, but also because of the deprivation of priests and bishops of the financial aid which they received under the State budget. Thus, the communists confined themselves to the elimination of the instruction of religion, which until

659 then had been conducted in all schools, to the removal of the
798 presence of church officials at the taking of the oath and to the introduction of civil marriage, which became obligatory, instead of the religious one, which hitorto was required
[571] (Articles 1 and 2 of the Decree having force of Law concerning Marriage, Durzhaven Vestnik, No. 108, May 12, 1945).

Although there was no formal declaration of the separation of Church and State, representatives of the church no longer appeared at public functions and the part which the church played in public life was mutely but radically reduced.

659 Nevertheless, the government continued to subsidize the church by allotting funds to it in the State budget. Moreover, in a purely political move, it amended the Statute
[571] of the Exarchate with a special Decree-Law (Durzhaven Vestnik, No. 11, January 15, 1945) and authorized the election of an Exarch. Apparently the government preferred to deal in the future with one man - the Exarch - instead of a Synod. Again the Bulgarians were always strongly in favor of having a single prelate at the head of their national church.

793 In January 1945 Archbishop Stefan of Sofia was elected Exarch of the Orthodox Church of Bulgaria. The new Exarch was an ardent Russophile, but not a bolshevik or communist sympathizer. Immediately after the election he journeyed to Moscow to pay a visit to the Moscow Patriarch, Alexis, which demonstrated a recognition of the primacy of the Moscow Patriarchate, and sent a delegation to the Patriarchate of Constantinople to negotiate for the removal

B. Jewish Minority

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The Jews in Bulgaria numbered about 50,000 and came originally from Spain. Until the last war they lived in absolute liberty and enjoyed all the rights of Bulgarian citizens. The Jewish colony maintained about 30 synagogues, of which seven are in Sofia, three in Plovdiv, two in Pleven, one in Vidin, one in Vratza, etc., and a consistory composed of preeminent men, the most notable of whom was the great Rabbi Dr. Ehrenpreiss (actually residing in Stockholm). For more than fifteen years Dr. Ehrenpreiss made a center of his residence from which Hebrew culture was propagated not only in the Balkans but in Eastern Europe as well.

The Jews not only were not persecuted, but also enjoyed the sympathy of the local population. This explains the fact that, although not numerous, they controlled the greater part of Bulgarian commerce, both domestic and foreign. The relations between Bulgarians and Jews were excellent, and sometimes went even as far as inter-marriage. The wife of the last Bulgarian Minister to the United States, Dr. Mevoran, who is of Jewish descent, is a Bulgarian.

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This harmony was not disturbed even after Hitler's seizure of power in Germany when, under the influence of the new regime in the Reich, national-socialist and fascist groups were also organized in Bulgaria. These groups endeavored, among other things, to incite anti-Jewish feelings among the

local population. The most active of these groups in that respect was the nationalistic organization "National Defence", under the leadership of a reserve general. Now and then the members of that organization staged a raid on some Jewish shops in Sofia where there lived no less than 20,000 Jews. But these sorties usually provoked by some discourteous act of the Jewish merchants, or of his employees, towards their Bulgarian customers, were ostracized by the government.

The situation changed abruptly at the beginning of World War II when the victories of the German Army in France made Hitler the virtual master of Europe. Bulgaria could not but take into account this change, the more so since her government was obviously inclined toward Germany. King Boris, whose power knew no limit, appointed then to the Ministry of Interior an attorney, none too intelligent, but an ardent Germanophile, who began to apply the national-socialist principles in the country and especially the theory of the purity of the race, which was claimed to be endanged in Bulgaria too. The national-socialists were shocked by the great liberty which the Jews enjoyed in Bulgaria, and openly began to talk of its suppression. Under German pressure, the Bulgarian government began to restrict its Jewish citizens. In December 1940 it sponsored in the legislature and the latter voted a law on the "Defence of the Nation", which deprived the Jewish citizens of their liberty and made them a lower class of citizens. The Jews were deprived of the right to serve in

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government or public institutions and in the army; the right to own landed property and movie theaters, and the right to publish newspapers or to participate in their publication. The Jews were forbidden to marry Bulgarians or hire Bulgarian maids and the Jewish children were denied admission to Bulgarian schools. Jewish participation in commerce and industry was made proportional to the Jewish population. This was very difficult to establish and resulted, therefore, in numerous abuses. Provision was made for the forcible evacuation of the Jewish population from the capital to the country, so as to remove it from the sight of the Germans, who were preparing to enter Bulgaria. Jewish youngmen, who were forbidden to fulfill their military service together with their Bulgarian fellow citizens, were sent to serve in the labor detachments organized after the first world war when the subsequent peace treaty prohibited universal military training in Bulgaria, and the Bulgarians replaced it with the so-called labor service for the utilization of the conscripts for various public works, mainly road construction. This organization was maintained after the creation of a regular army and still exists. The fact that the Jews were drafted into the labor service did not indicate discrimination. Discrimination consisted of the creation of separate units for the Jews, which, of course, were treated more severely than the others.

Nobody was pleased by this law, inspired by the desire to disprove the reproaches which the Germans were making to the

government, and King Boris, after signing the law, preferred to suspend its application for six months with the hope that events would allow him to abandon it as an unnecessary measure against public opinion. The government confined itself to the mere registration of all Jewish property, movable and immovable. However, when the German Army entered Bulgaria in March 1941, and in April, crushed and occupied Yugoslavia and Greece, anti-Jewish legislation could no longer be deferred. Since King Boris disliked to sign outright discriminatory laws, a law was passed which authorized the Council of Ministers to issue decrees designed to settle the Jewish and related questions. Another law assessed a levy of 20 percent on all property of the Jews. A third law took away from the Jews the concessional pharmacies by obliging them to liquidate their business. (In Bulgaria pharmacies are opened only with a concession from the authorities which give these concessions under strict conditions, and for strictly limited sections of the community under state control.)

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Acting on the authority of the powers given him by the legislature, the Council of Ministers established a special Commissariat for Jewish Affairs, which was given extensive powers, and which was placed under the direction of one of the most embittered persons in the country, acting in close cooperation with the German Legation in Sofia. It was this Commissariat which introduced the regime of limitations for the Jews who were required to sell all apartments and houses not used as personal residences; i.e., those which were rented, as well as the stock piles of various articles which they had

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hoarded at the beginning of the war. The Jews were required to entrust the Bulgarian National Bank with all their valuables, stocks, bonds, and insurance policies, and to liquidate their participation in various commercial and industrial enterprises. Property owned by Bulgarian Jews living abroad was simply seized. In the field of liberal professions, only 53 Jews were admitted to free practice, of which 21 were attorneys, 21 physicians, 7 dentists, 3 chemists, and 1 architect; most of them were allowed to practice because they were either decorated war veterans or converts to Christianity. Special identification cards were issued to Jews, and in order to distinguish them from Bulgarians, they were forced to wear on the lapels of their coats a yellow star of David (foreign Jews and war veterans were to wear red circles). Jewish radio and telephone receivers were often abused by the pro-German part of the population; but they never lost the sympathy of the people who knew that all of this was due to the Germans.

In Macedonia, which was occupied by Bulgarian troops but under German rule, the situation was slightly different. There were not many Jews there; they were assembled in one place, not in a concentration camp, as such a thing did not exist, but in a little town from where the Germans, one night in 1942, deported them without even informing the Bulgarian authorities, and transported them to Poland in closed freight cars.

The Germans could not treat the Bulgarian Jews in the

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same way; but they were determined to deport them with the consent of the government. To this effect they recived the cooperation of the Commissariat for Jewish Affairs and signed with the latter a formal agreement, which was ratified by the Council of Ministers, and according to which the government agreed to hand over to the German Government a certain number of Bulgarian Jews. This agreement was published by the press after a change in the government took place, but at the time it was kept strictly secret. The Jews, however, learned that they were to be sent to the ~~German~~ concentration camps and frenziedly began to look for protection. A spontaneous outburst of protests arose among the Bulgarian population, which had been badly rattled by the passage through the country of the freight trains loaded with the Macedonian Jews on its way to Romania. By the sickening scenes of the conditions of their transportation, the impression made by this action was shocking, and when it was learned that the same fate was reserved for the Bulgarian Jews, the whole country rose in a wave of protests which was expressed in thousands of letters addressed to the Court, imploring insistingly, and some even menacingly, the Head of the State to prevent this shame. The frothing created was such that the King saw himself obliged to emerge from his passiveness and to warn the Germans discreetly, but firmly, that he was not responsible for the order and the peace in the country if they continued this action. The Germans understood the warning and forsook the deportation of the Jews from Bulgaria. Instead, they

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deported the Jews en masse from Sofia forcibly to two main Jewish centers in the country, namely, the towns of Pleven and Vratza. There the Jews lived unmolested until the Coup d'Etat of September 9, 1944, when the new government immediately restored them to their former status. Thus, the Bulgarian Jews, although they suffered material and moral damages, were saved from destruction, contrary to what happened in some of the other countries occupied by Germany.

The new government repealed all anti-Jewish legislation; all the seized or sequestered property was returned to the Jewish owners. A special decree-law was promulgated for "the settlement of the consequences of the revocation of anti-Jewish legislation affecting private property." The Jews were given full satisfaction. This was at the beginning. No laws or decrees were disclosed which would discriminate against the Jews or restrict the exercise of Jewish faith. However, the general program of nationalization of industry and commerce affected strongly the source of livelihood of many Jews in Bulgaria. Once the government had nationalized all the commerce and all the industry of the country, most of the Jews were deprived of the exercise of their trade. Since 1947, they have been emigrating en masse to Palestine. According to a letter from Israel, published in the organ of the Bulgarian National Committee "Free and Independent Bulgaria" of October 28, 1949, there already are 40,000 Bulgarian Jews in Israel, and there are only about 8,000 Jews left in Bulgaria, which are awaiting their turn to leave, with the exception of 2,000 to 3,000 at the most who are

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The negotiations with the Greek Patriarchate, which
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although still called "Ecumenical", actually was reduced to a few dioceses in and around Constantinople, were carried on rather smoothly. The reconciliation of the two rival churches had been in preparation for a long time by the march of the events. The rivalry itself had no foundation any more. The defeat of the Greek expeditionary forces at the hands of Kemal Ataturk in their attempt at restoring the Byzantine Empire of the old days had had, as a consequence, the disappearance of Greek religious supremacy in the Orthodox world. As to the Bulgarians, the loss of Thrace and Macedonia had left them little to dispute about with the Patriarchate of Phanar. Moreover, the Greek-Bulgarian ecclesiastic quarrel was far less of a dogmatic nature than that of a political nature, and one may even say, a purely administrative one.

In effect, the canons of the Orthodox faith forbade the presence of two religious leaders of the same denomination in one town. It is on the basis of that rule that the Patriarchate had opposed, in 1871, the establishment of the See of the Bulgarian Exarch in Constantinople. However, at that time all Bulgarian lands were still under Ottoman rule, and there was no other place the Exarchate could go and still be in direct contact with the Turkish Government as its capital. Since that period, things have changed radically, and now there is no need for the presence of the Bulgarian Exarch in Constantinople. Furthermore, the Patriarchate was willing to recognize the complete independence of the Bulgarian Church, which it

was ready to proclaim autocephalous under an Exarch or a Patriarch, as the Bulgarians would have it. 795 798

On such a basis, an agreement was soon reached, and on February 23, 1945, a protocol was signed by the Patriarch and the Bulgarian delegates, and ratified by the Holy Synods of the two churches. The schism separating the Bulgarian Church from the Patriarchate since 1871 was eliminated.

This result was greatly facilitated by the favorable attitude of Patriarch Benjamine himself. Sensing the end of his days was drawing nearer, he was determined to carry out the task of reconciliation and pacification before his death. He came from the southern part of Macedonia (incorporated into Greece in 1913), and there are good reasons to consider him as a Bulgarian. He had not lost his national feeling and wanted to express that feeling by taking the intiative of the rapprochement between the Greeks and the Bulgarians. His moral strength is all the more outstanding in view of his weak physical condition. The Apostolic Nuncio in Constantinople has said of him and his ideal: "that old man rises above the contingencies of everyday life in the pursuit of a great ideal in the service of God and of Humanity."

The protocol of February 23 was to receive a solemn confirmation by a visit of Exarch Stefan to Patriarch Benjamin. 795 798 648 that visit was delayed by events until the second half of October 1945. In the meantime, the Patriarch suffered two heart attacks, and the composition of the Holy Synod of the Patriarchate had

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been altered by one of the periodical re-shufflings, which had removed precisely the most zealous supporters of the reconciliation. The Patriarch had enough strength to impose the continued adherence to the decisions which had been made, but the atmosphere was not at all the same. Stefan's visit to Alexis and the fact that he arrived in Constantinople (Istanbul) as it were directly from Moscow, were widely exploited to cause alarm and suspicion in the old Ottoman capital where a Russian-Bulgarian maneuver aimed at gaining moral control of the city was always feared. These fears were tacitly shared by the Turkish Government, and consequently, there were many obstacles to be removed. Nevertheless, Mgr. Stefan's visit was very successful in the outcome.

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Sofia tried to exploit that success and to widen the work of reconciliation to the peoples themselves, and not only to the churches. On October 30, 1945, Exarch Stefan handed to the Patriarch a short memorandum, in which the Bulgarian Government was asking the Patriarch to intercede before the Regent of Greece, Mgr. Damaskinos, in favor of the normalization of Greek-Bulgarian relations. Bulgaria decalred her readiness to repair all damages effectively caused by Bulgarian occupation authorities, taking into consideration, however, the public utility projects which the Bulgarians had undertaken in Greece. Bulgaria asserted that she had no purpose other than to establish friendly conditions of cooperation between the two countries.

To that Mgr. Damaskinos, then head of the Greek State, gave an evasive reply. He approved the lifting of the schism

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and West, where 4,000,000 Moslems were in close contact with western civilization and where also various Christian sects touched western Christianity, there was a field not to be passed over in my effort to carry the gospel into Asia.

Moreover, "the Bulgarians, the leading race in the Balkans, ambitious, progressive, and liberty-loving, made a particular appeal to the sympathies of the civilized world". (The Story of the American Board by William B. Strong).

In 1857 Dr. Hamlin, with a representative of the Turkish Missions Aid Society, made a tour of investigation into European Turkey and brought back a glowing report. They found "a people poor and ignorant indeed, yet thrifty and eager for learning".

By an understanding with the Methodist Episcopal Church North, of America, the American Board - Congregationalist - took its share of the land to be cultivated, the region south of the Balkans, placing its first missionaries at Adrianople.

Plovdiv was made the second station.

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The missionaries were brave, enthusiastic, gifted men and women. Their school for girls in Stara Zagora and the school for young men at Plovdiv prospered and encouraged the missionaries. But there were discouraging experiences too; influential parents at Stara Zagora withdrew their daughters when they understood the Protestant character of the school, and in 1867 a mob attacked the school and would have carried off the scholars but for the coolness and vigor of Mr. Morse in withstanding them.

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Here an appeal to the new law of religious liberty in Turkey, together with the help of friendly officials brought good results even from persecution.

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One of the best-known contributions of the Protestants to Bulgaria began as a little mission school for young men in 1860. It was called "The Collegiate and Theological Institute" and started with four pupils. It was shifted to several locations ans was closed temporarily during troublesome times, but was finally reestablished in 1871 at Samokov. The mission school for girls was also moved to Samokov that same year.

Samokov was chosenas a more promising town at that time. The climate was much better than in the hot district around Plovdiv. There were still no railroads in the country, and Sofia was an insignificant little place. There were prospering iron mines at Samokov and the place seemed one that would grow in the future.

Both boarding schools increased in attendance and in influence.

On June 30, 1871, the initial annual meeting of the European Turkey Mission was held at Stara Zagora. To this meeting the scholarly Dr. Riggs of Constamtinople brought the first bound volume of theBulgarian Bible. At this meeting the "European Turkey Mission" was organized. It was the first mission of the Board that, from the beginning, had the Bible in the language which the people could understand.

In 1871 the first evangelical church in Macedonia was organized at Bansko

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The Protestants had started an orphanage or two and these were being carried on in a Christian manner. It is not known whether or not they are still in operation.

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It is appropriate in these notes to mention the recent trials of early 1949 when 15 Protestant pastors were brought before the courts in Sofia and condemned by the Communists for treason. Much attention was given to these trials by the outside world. The trials were a part of the general persecution of religion and religious workers by the present Communists.

These Bulgarian pastors were on the whole humble people, representing small religious groups. They were trying in every way to conform to the new regulations of the Communists, so they were not dangerous to the regime. All they wanted was to be able to work quietly among their people. Several of them even went so far as to serve the Communists and try to show that the Communist regime was really a democratic one. Strange to say, these men suffered most in the trials and the sentences.

Aside from being representatives of religious groups, these men were also attached to American groups of the same name in America, so that fact worked against them too. The Communists want to convince their countries that religion and America are enemies of Communism.

At present in Bulgaria anyone who has at any time been connected with America, American schools, or organizations starting from America, is under surveillance and does not consider himself outside danger

8: Bojkoff K-4,5 (no date) 1946 EE1 Bulgaria EE1

befell them, There was another oppression, far more consequential in its scope, which tapped the resources of its spiritual culture amassed from the brilliant past. Such was the spiritual slavery imposed by tha Greek church. 175

15. Church and Spiritual Slavery. The struggle between the Bulgarian nation and the Greek church continued under the Turkish dominion. 798 175

These two contestants were caught in a deadly grapple. The Bulgarians claimed their proper rights but the Greeks opposed them on all points and saw to it that they were kept back on the land to till the soil for them behind the sea. The battle now was waged for churches, for bishops, for reading the gospels in Bulgarian and not in Greek, for schools, teachers, books and libraries! The Turks gave the Greek Patriarchate in Constantinople complete freedom of action over the spiritual life of the subjected Christian „rayahs". The Greeks never dreamt of such unlimited ecclesiastical authority even in the brilliant periods of the Byzantine empire. Never was the principle „divide and rule" applied more effectively, than by the Turks during the time of their domination. Bulgarian libraries were burned. The Patriarchate library in Tirnovo, for instance, was burned in 1628 and this was an irreparable loss for the Bulgarian nation. Such was the fate of many monasterial and church libraries and their priceless manuscripts. In 1823 old manuscripts were destroyed by fire in Tserovina, near Sofia; the same thing happened at Titcha, county of Shumen, in 1840, in Stara-Zagora and in the St. Zograph Bulgarian monastery of Athos. What little was left, in form and essence of the Bulgarian Patriarchate at Ochrid, was lost and wasted with the closing of the Patriarchate in 1867. This church struggle lasted since the second half of the 16th century until to-day. For nearly 400 years the Bulgarian people fought for their rights to establish their national language in the church service and prayers, to have their own clergymen and their own national church was to depend exclusively on the will of the people. How many nations could boast of such history and what other church has played such significant part in the preservation of its people?

6: Shuster S-4 (no date) 1954 El Europe
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nals, one of them the organ of the Communist-dominated Synod, made propaganda at the government's behest. Everyone who gave any indication of fidelity to the Christian creed in its true significance and glory had to reckon with the possibility that he would speedily be sentenced to one of the dreaded prisons—Kolarovgrad, for example—which were always crammed with the unfortunate victims of tyranny.

The Orthodox Church having been transformed into an abject lackey of the State, Communist wrath descended on the religious minorities. Protestants were the first victims. Missionaries had come to Bulgaria from Turkey, and had established schools which, despite wars and upheavals, gave a good education to boys and girls. An exemplary woman introduced the kindergarten system and trained native teachers. By the close of World War I, hostility to Protestants had pretty largely died down; and although the small congregations did not grow rapidly they successfully maintained their identities. Their pride and joy was the American College, situated near Sofia. It was closed by the Nazis in 1942 and has not been reopened. The work of the Y.M.C.A. and the Y.W.C.A. was suppressed at the same time, and the Communist regime has not lifted the prohibition.

The legislation adopted during February, 1949 (often referred to as the Canonical Purity Laws) contained a number of provisions designed to render impossible any religious activity under the auspices of a Church or institution with headquarters outside Bulgaria. It stipulated, for example, that any Church or any clergyman desiring "canonical relations with or aid or gifts from" institutions, organizations, or official personages abroad must secure permission in advance from the Ministry for Foreign Affairs. It was presumably under this legislation that fifteen Protestant pastors were brought to trial for high treason during 1949. It was the first large-scale action